Iran Pubs -
1-05/Iran
Relations
1- Misc.

AMERICA AND IRAN IN PERSPECTIVE: 1953 AND 1980

ROY M. MELBOURNE

Reality and History

History, like life, is highly complex and subjective, inducing an iconoclastic revision to reconcile the past with the current environment of concepts and actions. So rapid is our pace and so shifting our attitudes that the interval contracts between event and rewrite. Concerned professionals, active witnesses to the Eastern Europe beginnings of the cold war, watched bemused as revisionist historians asserted Stalin's moves were simply defensive against an aggressive America. Now, because of our present problems, there is a predictable cry claiming America was stupid (1980) ever to have meddled and become involved in Iran in 1953.

The fundamental interests of the United States and its allies and those of Iran, despite shifts in political regimes, have not changed. Each has need of the other in an environment that presents a lasting threat to Iran's territorial integrity and development, as well as to the world's energy needs. A basic problem therefore, yesterday and today, was and is to reconcile Iranian aspirations as an emerging modern nation with those vital interests.

The World of 1953 and Iran

The movement of great forces, while given definition by the vertebrae of power politics, has, since World War II, transformed the earth in a fashion that old historical maps could never convey. The world of 1953, already distant from today, was part of that great change.

Globally the cold war raged, raised to an all-out struggle by Korea, still without an armistice. A malignant senator had convinced his public that China was lost because key public servants were communist dupes, if not crypto-communists. Despite war losses, communist states were thought making a good recovery, helped by indigenous resources and a crucial, short run advantage of centralized priorities direction. Strategically centered, revolutionary communism was regarded as monolithic and as pressing against its worldwide frontiers. A strong America was the keystone of the free world (there was no credible Third World); it was a partner in a threatened NATO alliance not yet four years firm, while Western Europe and Japan were just finding their feet.

In the Mideast there were two

Dr. Melbourne, a Foreign Service officer, Class 1 Retired, was head of the political section in the American embassy at Tehran during and following the Mosadeq regime, and thereafter has followed Iranian developments. He does research and articles in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

coherent, sizable states: the tough kernel of republican Turkey, being buttressed by America against Soviet demands, and the new revolutionary military government of Egypt. Dynamic Israel was a newcomer, while the others were either colonially plotted land tracts designated as countries or old feudal societies. Iran was a mutant.

A geographic plateau, a long-distant culture, Shia Islam, and the shah as a focal symbol, served to give an identitiy to Iran's core, half the population. The rest included disparate elements sharing some of these features, but stretching, among others, from the Kurds of the northwest, the Qashqais of the south, to the Baluchis of the southeast. Iran, long buffeted by the Anglo-Russian rivalry, had lost significant territories to Russia and in the south, Khuzistan, had seen the British run the great oil fields and refinery essentially for their own benefit. The country had once been divided (1907) into spheres of influence between Russia and Great Britain and militarily between them during the urgencies of World War II. Thereafter British troops left, but it took great American pressure at the United Nations and some Iranian guile to impel the Russians to desert their puppet Azerbaijan regime and evacuate the country in 1946. A 1921 treaty, however, could give them a handle to return if this looked promising. Then, too, a secret clause of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact revealed ultimate Soviet aims by giving that country a free hand south in the direction of the Persian Gulf. This artery was seen by the West as the oil jugular of the free world and of nascent NATO.

Nevertheless, accumulated popular resentments toward foreign domination erupted over the issue of Iran's oil. The highly visible British controlled the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), divided between British government and private ownership, and refused to increase Iran's oil royalties at a time when the country was the world's largest oil exporter. Turbulence took over, and, when the smoke cleared, emotional nationalism was embodied in the 1951 coalition government and unilateral uncompensated oil nationalization was its result. The Iranian-British standoff featured a boycott of Iranian oil and deepening financial depression for Iran. To international concern that the deteriorating situation gave fertile scope for communist subversion, Iran's eccentric elderly prime minister merely replied, "Too bad for you." *Time* magazine thus started 1952 by naming him its man of the year. The caption: "He oiled the wheels of chaos." The old man was delighted.

"So most officers looked to the shah, and in their large Tehran club, prominently displayed as a talisman in an upright glass case, was the shah's bloody tunic worn when he was wounded by an assassin's attempt."

Mosadeq and the Shah

Iranian politics by 1953 continued to revolve around the twin pillars of nationalism and monarchy. The shah had not disowned the emotional xenophobia arising from the oil crisis. Prime Minister Mosadeq,* controlling the Majlis, or parliament, had taken care to govern in the name of the shah and not to challenge openly his popular position as a traditional symbol of stability and, despite his youth, as a father figure.

Mosadeq was of the landowner aristocracy, related to the Qajar dynasty, which was superseded by the present shah's rags-to-power war minister father when the son was a small boy. He had a dislike and contempt for the shah as a virtual usurper and there is no doubt his plans, despite his age, admitted of no rival. French-educated Mosadeq eventually had become leader of the Majlis nationalists and, as an old man, prime minister. On occasion he could carry the entire Majlis, even opponents, by his emotional speech, crying and fainting. A doctor who was a Majlis member once reached him, grabbed his wrist, and felt a full, regular conscious pulse. Pleading age and personal security, Mosadeq carried out his duties from his guarded home bedroom, which naturally restricted visitors and, if he played the invalid, the length of visits as well. There were no personal financial scandals. He lived simply, and in conversation could be witty and agreeable. Yet an excellent American reporter, after some interviews with him, exclaimed, "Intellectually he is the most dishonest man I have ever met."

The shah, personable and intelligent, found himself once more in a ceremonial position while the power was wielded by Mosadeq, of whose extreme oil policies he disapproved. As a youth he had been intimidated by his tyrannical father, and it is said that it was his twin sister who inherited the father's hard qualities. He was educated in Switzerland and then during the war was put on the throne when the British deported his father, who later died in South Africa. The new shah was successively subject to guidance in his constitutional role by the British and some old line Iranian politicians, including the military. The nationalist hurricane, exemplified in the coalition government called the National Front, needed him as a substantive symbol of Iranian continuity and nationalism.

It was congenial for the shah to bide his time in his palaces and court circle, keeping informed and in touch with military men. After all, by upbringing and training he had not been encouraged in positive action. Hence, while the man had a certain courage, by temper-

**English spellings of Farsi names had acceptable variations. "Mossaddegh" seemed too scholarly. The British, claiming cultural seniority, preferred "Mussadiq." The American embassy adopted the practical "Mosadeq."*

ament he was indecisive and not ruthless, hesitant to make decisions if there could be forked consequences. Foreigners speculated that he had dreams, for himself and the Pahlavi dynasty, of being a strong leader and builder of Iran, thereby exorcising his father. Meanwhile, he looked like a shah, he enjoyed ceremony, he was a nationalist by virtue of his position and memories, and he had learned, maybe from his early years, to play an appropriate role well whenever on view. The people liked the institution of the monarchy, and to them he was as important a figure as Mosadeq. In the public mind of 1953, they were still linked.

The Front and the Military

The National Front, like most coalitions, had incongruous components within the formal government and as supporters: some wealthy landowners, like Mosadeq; some reasonably competent, foreign-educated ministers and senior bureaucrats; a Majlis majority; Tehran university professors and students; Dr. Baghai and his Toilers party; active Shia clergy such as Ayatollah Kashani, the most politically known and influential with the Tehran bazaar; labor figures like Vice Premier Makki, controlling the oil workers; the Tudeh (Communist) party, and a large groundswell of the peasants, city workers and bazaar merchants. Inevitably opportunists like the foreign minister rode the wave. Such a coalition, as long as it focused on the villainous British and Iran's oil birthright, could have a fragile unity, but eroding time, other important issues and consequences, differing party objectives such as the communists, and personal conflicts could break it apart.

The military, so important a factor for any government, was not rocking the boat, but was looking to the shah. Its officers took their oath of loyalty and generally owed their promotions to him as their chief, not a transient prime minister. Of course, there were significant numbers of Tudeh and Mosadeq sympathizers which the short and long term would reveal. True, there was a constitution which had aspects of parliamentary government, but the professional military cadres in general felt themselves a breed apart. Further, their westernized military training proceeded under the aegis of an American military mission, and quantities of new equipment continued to arrive to bolster the effectiveness of the armed forces, despite the oil embargo and creeping financial difficulties. This shaping of the military Mosadeq hesitatingly approved, while at the same time watching the military closely, and, quietly by inducements, getting some careful supporters there in some useful spots.

Mosadeq could not seriously object to the military activities, for Iran's strategic position, like Turkey's, made it a front line of the non-communist world. Russia, despite the raucous emotions and theatrics of the anti-British syndrome, was the country truly feared as an aggressive neighbor. For American policy too, there appeared small reason in strengthening Turkey if there were not an effort to block, with the cooperation of Iran, its military chief and his forces, the road to the Persian Gulf. So most officers looked to the shah, and in their large Tehran club, prominently displayed as a talisman in an upright glass case, was the shah's bloody tunic worn when he was wounded by an assassin's attempt.

The British, Mosadeq, and Oil Politics

When Iranian oil nationalization came, the AIOC believed that it had an effective weapon in an oil boycott, supplemented by foreign court challenges if any distributor dared run the gauntlet. This proved true. Meanwhile, other gulf states were raising production and servicing Iran's old markets. The desired implication in those halcyon oil surplus days was that the new National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) might have no place to go. For the Americans, however, the oil impasse, embodying Iranian nationalist frustrations and Britain's desperate need for foreign exchange, was too important an economic, no, strategic, question to fester untended.

Before the issue exploded, the United States had confined itself to fruitlessly urging the British to be more forthcoming on royalties and other disputed matters, warning of the heavy consequences. To starve out the Iranian government and economy was similarly discouraged. When these courses jelled as policies, however, the economists, Americans included, made solemn periodic assessments on when Iran would have to capitulate. Successive crucial dates passed and the National Front, although frayed, was still there. The give in Iran's underdeveloped economy was consistently underrated. There was not much distance to fall.

After the death of Foreign Secretary Bevin, the Attlee Labor government was on unsure ground with his successor, the mediocre Herbert Morrison. Whitehall belatedly recognized that the problem was too serious to be left to the chairman of the AIOC. British embassy personnel also were gradually changed. However, it was not really until the return of the power of Churchill and Eden that Iran was moved to the political front burner.

Along with their economic strategy, the British had to recognize the concerns of their ally and, in hopeful or pessimistic expectations, approve American endeavors as middleman to find a compromise. Washington initially was reluctant to consider the oil issue as anything but an economic problem and resisted the indicators that it was basically a political question. The United States, at any rate, had the confidence of the Iranians, and thus embarked in 1951 on a persistent refuse-to-be-discouraged line, searching for a magic formula. This was punctuated by diverse visitors to Tehran for discussions with Mosadeq and his principal advisers. American senior statesmen, leading financial experts, oil company presidents, politicians, and a variety of scavenging personalities marked the procession. There was, of course, a large Tehran foreign press colony.

Shrewd Iranian politician that he was, Mosadeq talked from the intransigently-proclaimed oil policies that gave his political base. In short retrospect, it was clear that he wanted to use foreign talks to help gain what today might be deemed as not unusual. This included international acceptance of the oil takeover without significant compensation, and freedom of oil production and distribution, perhaps with other oil companies. Proposals were bruited, there were

exchanges between Tehran, London, and Washington, but the gap remained. Mosadeq had even gone to Washington and to the United Nations in New York to press his case, and his colorful presence provided reams of press copy.

If it could mean a settlement that would get the oil flowing, the United States decided it would be willing, both for its cold war concerns and for non-disruption of the gulf oil industry and states, to exempt American companies in the national interest from anti-trust laws so they might participate with others in the Iranian oil industry. The new Republican administration of 1953 followed the same course. There was still no solution.

Despite his theatrics that the West would be to blame and suffer if Iran's disorganization proved a communist field day, Mosadeq had the ego and hubris to believe that he could control the two parts of his situation, the oil issue and domestic politics. He seemed to think that, over time, American intercession with the economically troubled British would become pressure the British could not resist, thereby bringing success without appreciable concessions to the British. Domestically he felt no worrisome challenge from the shah. The congeries represented by the National Front he expected to manipulate.

Pushing a good thing too far or losing proportion are not unknown in Iran, as elsewhere. With his power, Mosadeq had sycophants and politically motivated groups, such as the foreign minister and Tudeh sympathizers, who encouraged him to press. Of the two parts of his situation, America was not on Mosadeq's wavelength.

The US and the Iranian Problem

The United States, sympathetic to its ally's financial problems and aware of the effects upon other oil operations in the Persian Gulf area, was not going to push for a debilitating, no-accommodation deal. It wanted a compromise. In regarding the Iranian flux it could see signs of strain in the National Front and restiveness among the shah and non-Front elements.

The United States was well informed. It had more than the Tehran embassy components and the three consulates at Isfahan, Meshed, and Tabriz. There were two other large operations scattered in the country responsible to the ambassador: the Military Mission and the Point Four Technical Assistance Mission. The former worked, of course, with the military and was most careful to keep that work purely professional, while the latter was the biggest such program in the world, again very prudent in confining itself to agricultural, health, education and like technical help activities, with coordinating suboffices in major areas of the country. The leadership of both missions was excellent.

The shifting situation and operations generated regular requested and voluntary factual and analytical reports to Washington on varied subjects. And in Tehran close liaison among the American elements included joint conferences and evaluations, each element from its respective sphere. With a new team handling affairs in London and the British embassy, eventually by 1952 the American and British governments were getting joint assessments from their Tehran embassies. However, prolongation of the oil crisis finally provoked Mosadeq into breaking relations with Great Britain, and one late autumn dawn its diplomats left by car convoy bound for Baghdad.

As the crisis deepened from 1952 and into 1953, Iranian antipathies and suspicions were fanned against Americans. At the least it was not discouraged by the leadership, by some encouraged, and the Tudeh party (progressively active) and the large Soviet embassy aided its rise. The United States was literally the man in the middle. Since the Iranians were not realizing their oil hopes through America, since it was Britain's NATO ally, and since domestic tensions were growing, the visible Americans became the target. It varied in parts of the country, but there were hostile incidents and demonstrations with something of a synthetic, organized, character about them. Americans became cautious going about in public, while shouts, graffiti, and doorway stickers had the same message, "Yankee, go home."

"The meetings took place, as customary, with the prime minister in his bed. There was one occasion, though, when the ambassador learned the talks were not all that private. The cane habitually used by the foreign minister was on the second floor railing when the ambassador left."

The Final Oil Talks

If all the oil talks over a prolonged span may be considered as serious preliminaries, the Americans decided that late 1952 was time for the finals. In planning its action contingencies as the situation deepened, Washington also analyzed the ranges on both sides and developed proposals. The outlines of the package have been publicly described as having AIOC compensation set by an arbiter or a panel, with the British dropping the oil blockade, while the United States ordered a large quantity of oil and gave a sizable advance to help Iranian recovery.

The American ambassador, whom Mosadeq respected, at year's end returned to Tehran armed with negotiating instructions. For over two months, intensive private discussions ensued between the ambassador and Mosadeq, with only a discreet Iranian staff member of the embassy, who was known to Mosadeq, present as interpreter. The meetings took place, as customary, with the prime minister in his bed. There was one occasion though, when the ambassador learned the talks were

not all that private. The cane habitually used by the foreign minister was on the second floor railing when the ambassador left. Nearby was a door to a room adjacent to Mosadeq's.

There were ups and downs in the sessions, but slowly a structure was taking shape, each agreed point a base for the next. Mosadeq had a small black book in which he would record substantive parts of discussions or agreed points. After some two months (it was now the end of February 1953), Mosadeq disagreed with an aspect mentioned by the ambassador during a session. He, disquieted, reminded the prime minister of his concurrence at an earlier date and suggested, since it had been written down, that he check in the black book. Mosadeq did, only to say that he could find no such reference of his agreement. As he held the book, both knew, without speaking, that it was not the original. The negotiations went on for a bit, but they could not regain their momentum. Americans gradually realized that there was also a domestically vulnerable Mosadeq. Being pressed by his advisers, he was no longer fully in control of the situation.

The National Front Disintegrates

The year 1953 brought some significant domestic shifts. National Front groups and influential adherents were sloughing off at a perceptible pace. The economy and currency were getting to a parlous state, the new middle class was falling away, government measures were becoming unpopular, Majlis members began resorting to that unique Iranian custom of seeking *bast* (asylum) in the Majlis building, and then there were conflicts among and disaffections from the leadership. The chief Shia supporter, Ayatollah Kashani and the religious-political element he represented, had long been alienated. Vice Premier Makki and the idle oil workers could no longer be relied upon. The intellectuals and students were divided. The general populace was seeing no results and it was hard, except for those under orders, to rally with the old fervor.

Showing gains within the Front were the opportunists and the Tudeh, which was burrowing deeper into the government and changing its complexion. Mosadeq was getting increasingly selective information on public attitudes, Front strength, and the elements of his support. Tudeh influence and organization under the eroding conditions of his regime made Mosadeq more amenable to its suggestions than he could have realized.

Mosadeq Goes for Full Power

Back in the summer of 1952 Mosadeq had requested dictatorial powers for six months to govern without the Majlis and to become war minister. Then the shah, fed up with his pressures, was induced to dismiss him as prime minister, as was his constitutional right. At first, he named an old workhorse, Qavam, who had held the position during the Russian crisis in 1946-47. Street mobs, among them the enthusiastic Tudeh, were orchestrated for three days of disruptive pro-Mosadeq demonstrations. The shah renamed Mosadeq, who got what he wished, including his man as army chief of staff. Nevertheless, showing the ambivalence of the situation, when Mosadeq tried to encourage the shah in his wish to leave the country for a vacation, Kashani (not on Mosadeq's side in the power bid) and others not of the Tudeh got out street mobs for the shah to remain. To avoid these demonstrators, Mosadeq had fled to the Majlis and there did obtain a vote of confidence. But the shah stayed. Also, the schism between Mosadeq and the ayatollah had become clear.

Early in 1953, Ayatollah Kashani, Vice Premier Makki and Dr. Baghai objected when Mosadeq sought and finally obtained from the Majlis a year's extension of the dictatorial powers under which he ruled the country. However, May and June brought rebuffs to Mosadeq. Oppositionists killed his close associate, the national police chief. The financially harassed prime minister by private letter, unknown to his own government and carried to Washington by the American ambassador on consultation, appealed to President Eisenhower for economic aid. The end of June the president replied in a published cold-shower negative, whose tenor was that it would be unfair to American taxpayers when Iran, if reaching a reasonable agreement with the British on compensation, could have funds from renewed oil marketing.

Thereafter, feeling more domestically beset, Mosadeq took arbitrary steps. His designee in July opposed Kashani, the incumbent, for election as Majlis speaker and won, but by 41-31—a warning. His efforts to oust the shah, control the army, and maintain absolute rule had created sizable opposition. In a long talk that late spring, Mosadeq's doctor son and confidante had disturbed American diplomats by his evasive and unrealistic picture of the situation. The Iranian people seemed to be going in one direction and Mosadeq another. Still, moving in a classic dictatorial pattern, Mosadeq assumed the shah's prerogative. By summer he dissolved the Majlis and received, by his intimidating control of the state structure, as well as use of supporters and the Tudeh, virtually unanimous approval in a national referendum.

For Mosadeq personally, even with the problems he was creating, many of the public still had a psychological regard. However, he was being opposed by the leader of a rump National Front regime, once overwhelmingly popular, who was shoring up his levels of power by whatever tactic or faction he could claim. By now it was into a seething, hot August.

Washington Chooses

The oil talks, which Washington and London had considered a reasonable, serious effort, had petered out by early spring. American information throughout Iran was confirming the generally deteriorating picture. The same policy realities influenced Democratic and Republican administrations. Thus, the United States decided it could not stand by while the political fragmentation and economic chaos of Iran continued, giving progressively greater impact to disciplined Soviet-backed forces such as the Tudeh. It was unacceptable to risk witnessing Iran drift into a pro-Tudeh regime that could place the Soviets on the Persian Gulf. Mosadeq, to obtain full Western support for his views, was deliberately pushing the United States into a choice.

During the hectic spring and summer days, the embassy and

consulates had stepped up their brisk pace, working to keep on top of the rush of events and to appreciate their meaning. Other parts of the American official establishment, every possible Iranian source, mullahs, journalists, intellectuals and students, merchants, Majlis members, regional and tribal leaders, the military, politicians, pro-and anti-Mosadeq figures, contributed to the information stream.

Spring into summer the naval attache* singly proved to have the most valuable personal contacts. His unusually pleasant, imperturbable personality had given him close Iranian relationships. He quietly moved among the inner circles of the royal court, was on intimate terms with some of Mosadeq's family and advisers, gambled with the perhaps pivotal Qashqai tribal khans, and even visited opposition General Zahedi in hiding. His reports were an essential part of the embassy's factual base for analysis.

Come August, the ambassador would have headed one of the most complex, large and demanding of American diplomatic misssions for two years. He was an exceptional man and had done his best. **His balanced analyses and recommendations had held the confidence of Washington, both on his trips there and with the procession of influential visitors. Even more difficult, he had the respect of Mosadeq and the shah. Over time, Mosadeq still listened when the ambassador expressed his strong misgivings at Iran's direction and situation, citing also American strategic concerns.

Official policies toward Iran had reached a dead end. In late June, the ambassador, on home consultation, faced with Washington the sober reality. This brought a decision approving a plan for covert action in which the British would cooperate. When notified, the Embassy's chargé (Minister Counselor Gordon H. Mattison) and chief political officer were pleased.

There was a self-imposed condition for the ambassador, who would not return nor talk to Mosadeq while the covert plan was in course. In the event of failure the ambassador might be indispensable to intervene with Mosadeq.

The feasible strategy was to turn to the other of the dual symbols of Iranian nationalism and authority, the shah. Although battered and his military control undercut, he still had a substantial base of support there and with the public, if the issue could be clearly posed as either the shah or Mosadeq, a choice the Iranians had so far resisted. The Americans understood that no covert action against a leader and a regime that would contend to the end could possibly succeed unless there was sufficient approval within the country for the change.

"Now, in the ambassador's presence, Mosadeq, whose advisers had kept him uninformed of conditions, directed the police chief to seek to curb the rioting."

A personal version of the cooperative planning between Americans and pro-shah Iranians, as well as the coup tactics, has been prepared by the head of the American side of the operation.* Other than the CIA, American personnel in the country carried out their regular duties unaware, aside from two senior officials, that a proposed change was in the offing. These officials, while generally informed of the progress of the CIA effort, deliberately did not seek planning details, tactics, or names of Iranian participants.

The consul at Tabriz, reassigned, was in Tehran to fly out on the very date of the scheduled coup attempt. There was a farewell evening, with one participant privately convinced he would not leave. (The consul had done a remarkable thing. By sheerest coincidence, in a previous incarnation he had acquired a doctorate in electronic physics. As a hobby, tinkering in Tabriz with his own receiving equipment, he had heard an intriguing prolonged sound. After continued checking, he decided the sounds were missiles in flight. Accorded more sophisticated apparatus, he had detected, the first foreigner to do so, the large Soviet missile test center at Kapusin Yar. From a little acorn a great monitoring project grew.)

The consul did leave the next morning. The coup had been forestalled by the Mosadeq regime.

Crisis and Success

As part of the covert action plan, by unpublicized decree on August 13, the shah dismissed Mosadeq and named General Zahedi, who was in hiding, to be prime minister. However, the Mosadeq regime was alerted by informants on the pace of the movement. Through elements of the military, such as Mosadeq's appointed chief of staff, it disrupted the shah's action by arrests which included the newly designated chief of staff. Discouraged by seeming failure, the shah voluntarily flew his private plane to Baghdad and traveled on to Rome on August 16. Mosadeq seemed to have unchallenged power, the coup effort to have failed.

Mass meetings, Tudeh-managed, celebrated the shah's departure. For the next two days, the Tudeh called for a democratic peoples' republic and "Death to the Shah," while the regime sought to prepare for a republic and to control the Tudeh mobs. These had been tearing down statues of the shah and his father, as well as painting the hammer and sickle throughout town. Other Iranian locales were experiencing restiveness and confusion. But during August 18 the information fog began to lift as some

*Now Captain Eric Pollard, USN (Retired).

**Ambassador Loy W. Henderson from positions as chargé and ambassador had an extraordinary personal knowledge of the Soviet Union, the Mideast, and South Asia. Since he had been responsible for these areas in the State Department, he also knew the workings of Washington. Combined with experience was an intuitive, wide-ranging mind and unshakable integrity.

*Counter-Coup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran, Kermit Roosevelt (McGraw Hill). Its delayed formal issuance is scheduled for 1980 and this writer has not yet read it. Mr. Roosevelt had a distinguished career with the OSS in World War II and was that agency's subsequent historian. Then he was a dedicated and valuable public servant with the CIA during the early cold war period.

papers carried the texts of the shah's decrees.

The ambassador had arrived in Tehran and, finally, the night of August 18, obtained an interview with Mosadeq. The latter stormily denounced the United States for inducing the shah to dimiss him, but the ambassador, who had alone decided on his intention, rejoined that he was not there to assess responsibility. His purpose was to get assurances for the safety of Americans and other foreigners threatened by the rioting street mobs. If not, all but a cadre of essential personnel would be evacuated. To a disconcerted Mosadeq this meant an American abandonment of Iran.

For two days Tudeh-inspired crowds had been bearing communist banners, assaulting foreigners, and pillaging. In demonstrations addressed by, among others, the foreign minister, there had been fiery anti-shah, anti-West speeches. The police, on Mosadeq's orders, had been passive. Now, in the ambassador's presence, Mosadeq, whose advisers had kept him uninformed of conditions, directed the police chief to seek to curb the rioting. Later, the communists would denounce Mosadeq for double-crossing them, even as they resisted the police.

August 19 was the day of the second effort, set before the ambassador's return. From south Tehran and the bazaar, aided by the final CIA galvanizing attempt, the pro-shah supporters streamed. Among them were the zirkaneh (traditional body building) club members, who by their physiques and public respect gave substance to the outpouring. The major cry was "Long live the Shah," and police, soldiers, military units and tanks merged with the swelling crowds.

After the Mosadeq triumph over the shah, there seemed to be a surprising turn of the tide. Embassy officers were around Tehran at suitable locales, phoning reports to an officer acting as city editor. In the confusion, the phone monitoring had subsided, and the reports came in reasonably fast and clear. The city editor passed on developments to officers, who incorporated them with other reports in outgoing immediate factual messages to the State Department. By day's end these totalled nineteen.

Evolving events and the popular tumult for the shah were trending against Mosadeq. Similar information later began filtering in from the consulates. About noon, to some officers in the embassy it seemed that the shah's forces had won, but their chief still deferred the preparation of such a message. As the hot early afternoon wore on until about 2:00 p.m., when the public customarily took refuge from the heat of the day, the fury continued to mount. The supervisor gave the green light and in short order the message was ready.

"A traditional backlash was to be expected, and this the mullahs, financially restricted by the shah, led in the old religious-political pattern of Islam."

Taking the cable to the ambassador for approval, the supervisor pointed to the previous factual messages, culminating in the present. He added a private opinion. In their two Iranian years, they had witnessed many mob demonstrations, but there had always been something artificial about them. Those previous tumults had tapered off in the afternoon, only to resume later. This day was an exception. Instead of a lapse due to the intense heat, public emotions and anti-Mosadeq activity were increasing. The people themselves fully meant it. Mosadeq was finished. Smiling, the ambassador rejoined, "I agree with you, but we certainly can't tell that [as the reason] to the department!" The message went.

Finally, the public had made its choice. Shaken by the shah's departure, people had become disturbed at the blatant activities of the Tudeh, which had emerged as a real substantive force behind Mosadeq. Thus, that day all cars ran with lights on in celebration. Each too, the people insisted, had to have a picture of the shah at the windshield, even if it was on a banknote. There was an air of festivity and relief throughout Tehran which reports from the consulates confirmed as true also for their areas. Iran had a road before it, uncertain as it might be, not just a roadblock. It was viewed by the Soviets as a great defeat.

Aftermath and Opportunity

Apparently the only real resistance shah supporters met was from the tanks and a military unit at Mosadeq's house. This had been overcome, Mosadeq escaping, only to be picked up later. It should not be forgotten that to many he was still a national symbol led astray into an extremist course, but who, as a person, had a tug on public emotions. After a delayed publicized trial, he was restricted to his home village. Some months after the coup, the foreign minister was found and tried. Not improbable communist connections were alleged and he was executed.

The shah, returning August 22, was overwhelmingly received. His prime minister, General Zahedi, other ministers, and a welcoming host were there. His new government was accorded emergency American aid until oil royalties could enter the treasury. To accomplish this in the new nationalist era, a foreign oil consortium with American participation worked out a 50-50 division of profits in Iran. The oil flowed, and funds became available for shah-determined programs and government operations. A broad opportunity for healthy change and direction within the country lay open to the shah from his fresh position of unchallenged power.

There are numerous post mortems on how the quarter century given the shah was squandered.* A lengthy, essentially idle period was followed by the so-called White Revolution, with mangled agrarian reforms and steps toward women's emancipation. Until his final departure, he gave systematic support for development in two areas, military and industrial. A student of Third World change might see Iran as thereby inevitably subject to

*An American official of the time asserts if in 1951-53 the United States government could have been assured, regardless of whom it supported, of 25 years of a stable non-Communist Iran, it would have leaped at it.

great strains in the political and social sectors. A traditional backlash was to be expected, and this the mullahs, financially restricted by the shah, led in the old religious-political pattern of Islam. As well, an Iranian revision of history would, from discontent, deny the earlier popular acceptance of the shah and view the Americans, not as catalysts, but as sinister opponents of the national will.

Prolonged full power can corrupt any essentially well-intentioned and irresolute man having expansive private dreams and the solid means for projecting his authority. Postures can substitute for reality. There was no systematic group of prestigious advisers to urge meaningful, well-paced reforms, particularly as to social effects and proportion. Royal family exploitation of the country as its preserve and the rampant excesses of his secret police were widespread knowledge. None can say whether, by turning decisive and using the military machine he had nurtured, the shah might have held on. However, he left and a charismatic figure returned.

Nationalism and Three Leaders

In the enthusiastic surge of national emotion, the Ayatollah Khomeini embodied the successful fruition of implacable resistance to the shah and his royal rule throughout a 15-year exile. Here, once again, was a fresh start.

It is tempting to shape analogies. Mosadeq was the symbol of a frustrated nationalism rebelling against what it deemed foreign dominance by the British and their control of domestic oil. Now, the ayatollah was a nationalist symbol of triumph over an authoritarian rule which repeatedly misused its opportunities and, said its opponents, only stayed in place due to the Americans. Even in the shah's earlier victory over Mosadeq there was a contributing concern over the Tudeh and fear of the Soviet Union. Each of the eruptions revealed a part of the Iranian xenophobia.

Domestic ills had direct relation to the foreigner, who was perceived as going against the national culture by manipulating, as the unseen hand, the regime the people deposed. For Mosadeq and the National Front, the object of obloquy was Great Britain. For Khomeini and his Revolutionary Council, the scapegoat was the United States. The British were assailed as having conspired with every government until Mosadeq to maintain their control. The Americans were condemned as having thwarted through the shah the aspirations of the Iranian people.

To draw the three leaders together as makers of the country's history, the shah seems a centerpiece. Both Mosadeq and Khomeini, one well-nigh fatal to the shah's rule and the other representing its demise, had been spared by the shah himself to pursue their long-range purposes. As a youth he had intervened with his reluctant father to save Mosadeq's life. In 1963, he had so misjudged the depth of Khomeini's hatred as to permit him to go in exile to Najaf, a Shia holy city in Iraq, and then to press for his departure to Europe. From the standpoint of a regime hardly democratic and requiring a strong, if not ruthless, leader to maintain that course, realistically these might be termed haunting errors.

Khomeini is not Mosadeq's clerical clone. Mosadeq also could manipulate men and drove for full power. But where he was worldly and witty, Khomeini is obsessively vindictive and has a medieval disinterest in how today's world works. Yet he and Mosadeq share a distinction. Each in his turn, as a symbol of destructiveness, was *Time* magazine's man of the year.

Supporting groups of Khomeini's junta can draw upon the National Front's techniques, now political tradition, in handling street demonstrations and in timing to gain maximum policy enthusiasm: processions, chanted slogans including death to the contemporary enemy, ways to suppress dissent, clever use of the media, demagogic speeches, rigged national voting referenda, and always the tendency to excess. This last, the bane of Iran, is perhaps understandable when harnessed emotions get their release. Then there are always the Soviet-influenced factions and the Tudeh, encouraging extremism and waiting to pick up the pieces.

Current Realities

While the tactics and events of Iranian nationalism and politics can be compared, they are transitory when viewed against some durable realities. Iran is still the space between the Persian Gulf and the Soviet Union. Along its borders in U formation the non-Iranian elements remain, half of the total people and attracted to autonomy: Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Afghans, Turkmen. To survive as a single state Iran must seek to provide security and an economy that serves the mutual interest. To achieve this, Iran must continue to export oil for food and the materials its economic and technological progress require. To protect its interests, a cohesive nation must have effective security forces. Notwithstanding the Ayatolah Khomeini, Iran is a part of the modern world.

For the United States too, the strategic, political, and economic aspects of the Iranian situation still bulk large. The US and its allies are more than ever dependent upon gulf oil. It knows a fragmented Iran, or even one wholly or in part pro-Soviet, could precipitate a world crisis at the gulf. Iran in its upheavals has never yet experienced the form of domestic total war as waged by the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Iranian ferment the world is witnessing requires, as the secretary of state said in another context, that the United States "be alert to the reality that internal tensions present opportunities for outside interference." Cast as the villain and subject to great provocations, which could well be sporadic, America must exercise a restraint it emotionally may not feel. At the same time, it would be foolhardy not to be politically and militarily prepared for any contingency.

Iran, to remain independent, must at some stage of its turmoil turn towards the great free democracies. This does not mean that the United States or any single foreign state would have a preponderant share in helping Iran build its future. That era is gone. If America can work within a partnership to that end, this would be a great accomplishment. Still, one must have a basis to build on and the destroyers, in full cry, have the easier task. World peace indeed may depend upon whether the Iranians alone can pull themselves together. The odds are uncertain.